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TAGS: PREL PL

SUBJECT: LECH WALESA CALLS FOR NEW ERA OF U.S. LEADERSHIP

Classified By: Ambassador Ashe for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Nobel Laureate and former Polish President Lech Walesa told the Ambassador January 10 that the United States -- while still a military and economic power -- is no longer the moral or political leader it once was. After the fall of communism, Walesa said, the world needs to be "rearranged." We no longer live in a bipolar world. We need new programs and structures to deal with the new reality, he argued, but did not offer specific ideas. "The U.S. has made many mistakes lately. We have all seen the effects." Nevertheless, Walesa said, the world needs the United States to be a leader again. "You are our last resort. You are indispensable."

¶2. (C) Unfortunately, Walesa argued, the United States had failed to provide the leadership needed to bring about the necessary changes. "We know the Evil Empire fell, but what happened to the Good Empire?" Walesa expressed concern about the new U.S. administration. Noting that "the road to hell is paved with good intentions," Walesa said the incoming President-elect "has raised the hopes of Americans -- and the world -- too high. I am not sure if he has the knowledge or the experience." Walesa said it was inaccurate to draw comparisons with John F. Kennedy. "Back then, we operated within certain limits. The threats were serious, but we had clear rules and a defined playing field," he insisted.

¶3. (C) The EU is not in a position to provide the necessary leadership, Walesa continued. Member states cannot agree on what the EU is and what its role should be. "This will happen slowly, but we got off to a bad start. We should have agreed on a program first." Walesa argued that the EU, a product of the bipolar Cold War world, was poorly organized. "I may not have agreed with them, but (President Lech Kaczynski and his twin brother, former PM Jaroslaw Kaczynski) were correct in pointing out the EU's problems." Walesa lamented that too few EU members were focused on improving the EU's organizational structure. "Things are better, but we still have work to do."

¶4. (C) Walesa, one of 12 members of the EU Reflection Group established to make recommendations on major challenges facing the EU, expressed frustration with the Reflection Group. "I had hoped we would talk about new structures and programs," Walesa said. "Now I see there are limits to what we can accomplish." Walesa said his 11 colleagues were more inclined to suggest minor reforms. "I tried to shake them up," Walesa complained, "but they are all lawyers." Asked what was needed, Walesa responded excitedly, "We need another revolution to wake people up. Ours -- Solidarity -- was too small."

¶5. (C) Walesa noted that the Ukraine-Russia gas dispute had showed the clear need for EU solidarity on energy and for a unified Russia policy. "We can test our strategies on Russia, and then use them on China," he mused. "There is still time to steer Russia's development. We have to change their mentality and their hegemonic perspective." He argued

that the U.S. and the EU must work together -- "calmly, peacefully" -- to address the Russia challenge. Walesa posited that there are two Vladimir Putins. "Both are disciplined, but only one is inclined toward reform. The other is intent on showing the world what Russia can do. We must help the good side of Putin come out."

¶6. (C) Asked for his views on the future of U.S.-Polish relations, Walesa sat straight up in his chair. "You have to do away with visas as quickly as possible. It might be messy, but you have to do it. If you do not, you will lose your friends." He lamented that the U.S. had "already lost a generation" of young Poles. COMMENT: In a January 5 meeting with the Ambassador, the Archbishop of Krakow, Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, made similar comments. Dziwisz speculated that even if Poland joins the Visa Waiver Program soon, it might be too late to reverse the negative impact on U.S.-Polish relations.

ASHE